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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
IO-13 AID-05 TRSE-00 OMB-01 ACDA-12 NEA-10 /102 W
----------080905 220901Z /11
P R 220025Z MAR 78
FM AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1947
INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON PRIORITY
AMCONSUL OPORTO
COMUSFORAZ
USCINCEUR
CINCLANT

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 PONTA DELGADA 0190

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, PO
SUBJECT: RECENT FLA ACTIVITIES

REF: A) LISBON 2054(DTG 201705Z MAR 78)(NOTAL) AND B) STATE
066155(DTG 150217Z MAR 78)(NOTAL)

SUMMARY: AZOREAN LIBERATION FRONT (FLA) LEADER JOSE DE ALMEIDA CAME BY THE CONSULATE MARCH 20 OSTENSIBLY TO DELIVER THE TEXT OF THE "AZOREAN MANIFESTO" HE HAD PRESENTED TO AN ENTHUSIASTIC INTER-ISLAND GATHERING OF 2000 FLA FAITHFUL AT A PONTA DELGADA THEATER MARCH 18. DURING THE COURSE OF THE ENSUING CONVERSATION, ALMEIDA REITERATED THE MANIFESTO'S WELL PUBLICIZED THREAT TO PROCEED TO A "NATIONAL (SIC) ARMED UPRISING BY THE AZOREAN PEOPLE" IF LISBON CONTINUED TO TURN A DEAF EAR TO AZOREAN ASPIRATIONS FOR INDEPENDENCE, AND BOASTED THAT THE

FLA WAS NOW WELL ARMED. HOWEVER, HE DECLINED TO ENTER INTO SPECIFICS ON HOW OR WHEN THE FLA'S NEW FOUND POWER MIGHT BE COMMITTED, SAYING ONLY THAT 1978 WOULD BE A DECISIVE YEAR FOR THE AZOREAN PEOPLE. HIS CUSTOMARY BOMBAST NOTWITHSTANDING, ALMEIDA SEEMED GENUINELY BUOYED BY
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THE RALLY, AT WHICH HIS HERETOFORE DE FACTO POSITION AS FLA LEADER WAS

FORMALIZED BY ACCLAMATION. DESPITE HIS DENIALS, HOWEVER, IT APPEARS HE STAGED THE EVENT (AND DRAFTED THE MANIFESTO) PRINCIPALLY TO BUCK UP

THE SPIRITS OF FLA SUPPORTERS WHOSE RANKS, HE REALIZED, MIGHT BE THINNED BY MAJOR GOP CONCESSIONS ON AUTONOMY. WHILE THE FLA

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UNDOUBTEDLY WILL SEARCH FOR, AND PROBABLY FIND, WAYS TO GOAD THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES INTO AN OVER REACTION, AT THIS POINT SEPARATIST TALK OF AN ARMED UPRISING SHOULD BE DISMISSED AS NO MORE THAN MORALE BUILDING RHETORIC. END SUMMARY.

1. FLA MANIFESTO AZOREANO: THE MAIN POINTS OF THE FLA MANIFESTO ALMEIDA PRESENTED MARCH 18:
----- REAFFIRMED THE FLA'S GOAL OF TOTAL INDEPENDENCE FROM PORTUGAL;
----- URGED PORTUGAL TO AGREE TO PROMPT NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE FLA TO ESTABLISH A TIMETABLE FOR THE TRANSFER OF POWER TO THE FLA;
----- WARNED THAT IF LISBON PERSISTED IN ITS DISREGARD OF FLA PRETENSIONS, THE FLA WOULD PROCEED TO A "NATINAL ARMED UPRISING BY THE AZOREAN PEOPLE UNTIL FINAL VICTORY";
----- PLEDGED THAT IN CASE INDEPENDENCE WERE DECLARED UNILATERALLY BY THE FLA, THE MOVEMENT WOULD DEMONSTRATE ITS RESPECT FOR DEMOCRACY BY PROMPTLY SUBMITTING ITS ACTION TO A POPULAR VOTE; AND
----- DECLARED SUPPORT FOR A DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED REPUBLIC GOVERNMENT, A PLURALIST POLITICAL SYSTEM, BUT WITHOUT MARXIST PARTICIPATION, AND RESPECT FOR THE UN CHARTER.

2. IN A CONVERSATION WITH AMCONSUL MARCH 20, ALMEIDA MADE THE FOLLOWING MAIN POINTS: ARMED UPRISING: ALMEIDA WAS RELUCTANT TO ELABORATE ON THE FLA MANIFESTO'S THREAT OF ARMED UPRISING, ALTHOUGH HE ADMITTED THAT IT WOULD NOT OCCUR IN THE NEAR FUTURE. OVER

THE LONGER TERM, HE SAID, THE ONLY WAY FOR PORTUGAL TO HEAD OFF BLOOD-
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SHED WAS TO AGREE TO AN INTERNATIONALLY GUARANTEED REFERENDUM ON INDEPENDENCE AND RESPECT THE RESULTS. HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT WITH

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FM AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1948
INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON PRIORITY
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ONLY A MONTH'S PREPARATION, THE "INDEPENDENTISTAS"
WOULD WIN OVERWHELMINGLY. HE CLAIMED THAT DESPITE THEIR HIGH PERSONAL

REGARD FOR RGA PRESIDENT MOTA AMARAL, THE REGION'S PRIESTS FAVORED
INDEPENDENCE NOW AND THEIR SUPPORT FROM THE PULPIT WOULD PROVE
DECISIVE.

3. 1978 DECISIVE: 1978 WOULD BE A DECISIVE YEAR FOR AZOREAN
INDEPENDENCE. WITH THE PORTUGUESE ECONOMY GOING DOWN HILL AND
DRAGGING THE AZOREAN ECONOMY WITH IT, THE DANGER OF MARXIST INFILTRA-
TION OF THE REGION HAD INCREASED. CONSEQUENTLY, IT WAS NECESSARY TO
CUT THE CORD WITH LISBON AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

4. FLA ARMED: FOR THE FIRST TIME THE FLA WAS WELL ARMED AND COULD
DEAL FROM MILITARY STRENGTH. WEAPONS HAD BEEN PROVIDED FROM "FRIENDS"

ABROAD AS WELL AS FROM RECNENT FLA SEIZURES OF COMMUNIST ARMS CACHES
ON SAO MIGUEL ISLAND. IN THE FACE OF THE SKEPTICISM OF HIS
INTERLOCUTOR, ALMEIDA INSISTED THAT SOME OF THE COMMUNIST ARMS
SEIZED FIRST HAD BEEN SPOTTED BY FLA SYMPATHIZERS BEING OFF-LOADED FROM
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A SOVIET MERCHANT SHIP DOCKED IN PONTA DELGADA. OTHERS, HE
ALLEGED, HAD BEEN SMUGGLED IN BY COMMUNISTS FROM CONTINENTAL PORTUGAL
SOME TIME AGO.

5. FLA WELCOMED PROVOCATION: BECAUSE OF THE FLA'S INCREASED CAPACITY

FOR SELF-DEFENSE, FLA MILITANTS WERE NOW "ANXIOUS" TO BE PROVOKED
BY CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES IN ORDER TO DEMONSTRATE THE
MOVEMENT'S NEW MILITARY STRENGTH. HE WAS THE ONLY ONE CAPABLE OF
PREVENTING AN UNDISCIPLINED OUTBREAK OF ANTI-LISBON VIOLENCE AT THE
PRESENT TIME. HOWEVER, THE FLA WOULD RESPOND WITH FORCE AND WITH HIS
BLESSING IF THE AUTHORITIES INTERFERED WITH THE FLA'S PLANNED
DEMONSTRATION OF "AZOREAN NATIONALISM"(ESSENTIALLY A FLAG AND LIGHT
DISPLAY) DURING THE SANTO CRISTO FESTIVAL IN PONTA DELGADA IN LATE
APRIL. (COMMENT: THE SANTO CRISTO FESTIVAL, SAO MIGUEL'S PREMIER
RELIGIOUS EVENT, ATTRACTS TENS OF THOUSANDS OF PARTICIPANTS. ATTEMPTS

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BY POLICE TO REMOVE AN FLA FLAG FROM PONTA DELGADA'S MAIN SQUARE DURING LAST YEAR'S CELEBRATIONS TRIGGERED LARGE SCALE, VIOLENT DEMONSTRATIONS. ALMEIDA, WHO RETURNED FROM ABROAD WHEN HE LEARNED OF THE DISTURBANCES, PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN CALMING THE CROWDS, THEREBY DEMONSTRATING TO THE AUTHORITIES HIS HOLD ON THEM. END COMMENT.)

6. U.S. SUPPORT: THE FLA DOES NOT EXPECT NOR DOES IT REQUIRE U.S. SUPPORT. THE SEPARATISTS REQUIRE ONLY THAT THE U.S. NOT OPPOSE THEM. DESPITE AMCONSUL'S INSISTENCE TO THE CONTRARY, ALMEIDA DISMISSED AS "SIMPLY A PRO FORMA DIPLOMATIC NECESSITY" THE RECENT INEQUIVOCABLE DEPARTMENT RESPONSE TO A PRESS QUERY CONCERNING QADHFI'S DECLARATIONS IN SUPPORT OF INDEPENDENCE OF THE ATLANTIC ISLANDS(REF B).

7. MOTA AMARAL A SEPARATIST: ALMEIDA REPEATED AN EARLIER CLAIM THAT AZOREAN REGIONAL GOVERNMENT PRESIDENT MOTA AMARAL WAS A CONFIDENTIAL

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SEPARATIST AND AN AZOREAN PATRIOT. HOWEVER, HE SAID THAT MOTA AMARAL'S ALLEGED POLICY OF "GRADUAL INDEPENDENCE" COULD LEAD TO THE DESTRUCTION OF THE AZOREAN ECONOMY AND THE INFILTRATION OF LEFTIST

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IDEOLOGIES FROM THE MAINLAND.

8. INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL: ALMEIDA SAID HE WOULD BE SOON TRAVELING TO EUROPE, THE U.S. AND AN UNSPECIFIED AFRICAN COUNTRY (BUT NOT LIBYA OR SOUTH AFRICA) TO DRUM UP SUPPORT FOR HIS CAUSE.

9. COMMENT: DESPITE HIS FIRM PRIVATE DENIALS, ALMEIDA'S DECISION TO STAGE HIS CAREFULLY ORCHESTRATED SHOW OF FORCE NOW WAS ALMOST CERTAINLY PRECIPITATED, AT LEAST IN PART, BY THE INCIPIENT BUT PROMISING REGIONAL GOVERNEMT /LISBON DIALOGUE ON THE MEANS TO PROCEED WITH THE CONSOLIDATION OF REGIONAL AUTONOMY. AS THE FLA LEADER WELL KNOWS, THE AZOREAN SEPARATIST MOVEMENT HAS FARED BEST DURING PERIODS OF OPEN RGA/GOP HOSTILITY. MAJOR CENTRAL GOVERNMENT CONCESSIONS ON REGIONAL AUTONOMY, PLUS THE SUBSTITUTION OF THE INCUMBENT MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC WITH A MORE POLITICALLY SENSITIVE SUCCESSOR, WOULD DAMPEN SUPPORT FOR THE SEPARATIST CAUSE IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE.
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10. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, JOSE DE ALMEIDA FELT IT IMPERATIVE TO RECHARGE THE MORALE OF HIS FAITHFUL (MOST OF WHOM, BUT BY NO MEANS ALL,

RESIDE ON SAO MIGUEL ISLAND) SUFFICIENTLY TO CARRY THEM WELL INTO OR THROUGH A POSSIBLE PERIOD OF RGA/GOP COOPERATION. THE FLA'S PRESENTATION OF A NEW "MANIFESTO" WITH ITS THREAT OF "ARMED UPRISING" (CHEERED WILDLY BY THE ASSEMBLY), WHILE DISQUIETING, SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY AT FACE VALUE, BUT PRINCIPALLY AS PART OF THIS MORALE BUILDING PROCESS.
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